

# Foster Kennedy

*February 7, 1884 — January 7, 1952*

To Foster Kennedy life was so attractive and to life he brought such a rich, warm personality, that it is not easy to write of him as one who has parted company with us.

His friends will always remember his sparkling conversation, his flashing humor, and his intellectual activities which were far beyond the conventional pattern. His mind was keen and flexible. The vast range of his curiosity is reflected in the diversity of his writings which were enriched by a unique gift for dramatic expression as well as distinction of style. Kennedy was a comprehensive observer. Experience wrote his ideas. For him, science was not mere observation, nor the docile following of authority. In his Presidential Address “Science, Civilization and Faith”, before the American Neurological Association, he wrote: “So in science, we risk degenerating into a medley of hypothesis if we join not science to philosophy, which the Greeks used to integrate all knowledge. And philosophy lacks meaning if there be little feeling for beauty and the arts that make a pattern for us out of the unknowable; for life, ‘like a dome of many colored glass, stains the white radiance of eternity.’ Science can be no cloistered or fugitive thing. It cannot sit cowering in its laboratory, while freedom dies.”

Kennedy worshipped freedom of the spirit and fought for it. During World War I he was granted leave of absence to go to France with the Harvard Unit, February 26, 1917. He served as Medicin-Chef, Hospital Militaire V. H. No. 76, France; he was commissioned Lieutenant, Royal British Army Medical Corps, France, and soon promoted to Captain and Major. His name appeared in dispatches of that period.

As Director of the Neurological Service, Second (Cornell) Medical Division, Bellevue Hospital, to which he took office December 7, 1915, he became a recognized leader in medicine throughout the world and brought distinction both to the Neurological Service and to Bellevue Hospital. His merit was acknowledged by the neurological societies of London, Paris, Mexico, Cuba, Sweden and Budapest. He was made President of the American Neurological Association. He received from Cuba the decoration, Orden Nacional de Merito, Carlos F. Finley en el brado de Official; from France, Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

Kennedy was a great doctor, a great scholar, a great friend, a great public figure—a great man. We feel deeply the true measure of his personality and friendship in his passing. Fortunately, his dynamic spirit, his inspiration, and the memory of his iridescent wit will keep his greatness before us for our contemplation.